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President: Mr. Essy ..... (Côte d'Ivoire)

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

Agenda item 40 *(continued)*

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/49/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/636)

Mr. Legwaila (Botswana): The blessings of the post-cold-war era may not have been evenly distributed, but for some they have brought about real salvation and redemption from ideological and racial damnation. I speak as one who has experienced first-hand the salvation and redemption of a people — the people of southern Africa — from the pernicious forces of darkness represented by the racist ideology of apartheid. I would not be so irreligious as to make the heretical claim that southern Africa today stands triumphant at the gates of Heaven, but I am certain that the Assembly shares the celebratory euphoria we feel over the total liberation of our region. Beyond belief, southern Africa in its entirety is free at last.

Palestine, like southern Africa, has endured for too long the trials and tribulations of war and death without mercy. With the signing last year of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), one would have thought a credible abandonment of the old negative posture in the Middle Eastern politics of negotiations by war had been initiated and had engendered in its wake the prospect that soon that troubled region, like the southern African region, might enjoy some deliverance from its painful past. Not quite yet. Unfortunately, both Palestinians and Israelis have yet to enjoy peace, despite the recent changes in the area, because there remain, in that troubled region, those who still derive comfort from the peace of the grave. A negotiated peace is not in their interest. Theirs are the politics of the absolute, so reminiscent of the politics of the practitioners of apartheid.

The peace process in that dangerous area of the Middle East is too vital, too crucial, to be allowed to wither in the hands of those who believe they have a stake only in the perpetuation of violence. The international community is a stakeholder in that process and must ensure that, in spite of the terrible odds against it, the process is nurtured and pursued to its logical conclusion.

It is painfully obvious, however, that so long as the fruits of the limited autonomy enjoyed by the Palestinians in Gaza and Jericho amount to nothing more than vague symbols of empowerment in the form of police uniforms and a flag, while poverty and squalor continue to be the order of the day in the area, with nothing in sight to indicate imminent relief from misery for its inhabitants, the naysayers, the nihilists, will continue to have a field-day. Clearly, therefore, the international community will have to do more to make the partial change that has taken

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place in the occupied areas a lasting reality. Palestinians cannot eat flags and police uniforms. Empowerment deriving from the conferment of autonomous authority in Gaza and Jericho must bring with it a materially transforming effect on the lives of its beneficiaries, the Palestinian people, who have for so long languished in such terrible deprivation.

There is also one ineluctable consideration that can be lost sight of only to the inevitable detriment of what has been achieved so far: the pace at which the agreement between Israel and the PLO is implemented. It goes without saying that half measures in any process of desperate political change can never win a contest against impatience. The slower the pace of change in the occupied areas of the West Bank and Gaza, the more heightened the impatience of its intended beneficiaries, and the bolder and the more vicious the opposition from those who advocate change by revolution.

Nevertheless, Botswana has never concealed the enthusiasm with which we have welcomed and supported the discovery of some common ground between the people of Israel and their brethren, the people of Palestine. Our support for peaceful change in the area is inexorable, and impervious to equivocation. We see the normalization of relations between Israel and Jordan as a happy portent for the advent of a new era of peace through justice for all in the Middle East.

That is why we cannot but continue to urge those neighbours of Israel that have not done so to come to some accommodation with the Jewish nation, and we urge the Jewish nation to do the same, so that a comprehensive, just and durable peace in the area of the Middle East, pursuant to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), can at last be established. It can be done. The world has changed. The Middle East is by no means an exception to the universal trend, now firmly established, that no problem, however intractable it is considered, is beyond a negotiated solution. If this were not true, I can assure the Assembly, we who not long ago were bereft of any hope for change in our lifetime in South Africa would still be living under apartheid.

Mr. Owada (Japan): It would be no exaggeration to declare that 1994 has been a historic landmark in the long years of efforts to establish lasting peace and stability throughout the Middle East. The progress we have witnessed this past year is both genuine and dramatic. As a result, the entire political structure of the region is undergoing a fundamental change.

In September 1993, the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements was signed in Washington as a blueprint for peace between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The international community registered its full support for this achievement through General Assembly resolution 48/58, which was adopted with the positive votes of an overwhelming majority of Member States, including Israel and almost all the Arab States.

In Cairo on 4 May of this year, the Israelis and Palestinians concluded a second historic agreement, as a result of which the Palestinians have at last begun to manage their own affairs in Gaza and Jericho. We look forward to the transfer of power and responsibilities to the Palestinians in the West Bank, as agreed by the two parties in the Declaration of Principles.

Another historic advance was made just last month with the signing of a peace treaty by Israel and Jordan. This achievement is of particular importance because, based upon the Washington Declaration signed in July 1994, which terminated the state of belligerency between those two countries, it opened the way for them to explore the potential for future bilateral cooperation in such areas as the economy, tourism, natural and human resources, and infrastructure. Japan pays tribute to the Governments of Jordan and of Israel for their courageous efforts to establish a partnership for peace.

It is the ardent hope of Japan that this achievement will in turn be followed by breakthroughs in the negotiations between Israel and Syria and between Israel and Lebanon. Indeed, the role of Syria in our efforts to achieve a comprehensive peace in the Middle East is absolutely critical; the security and stability of the region cannot be ensured until there is peace between Syria and Israel. We call upon those two countries to pursue vigorously the efforts to translate their desire for peace into concrete action. Japan will support and assist their endeavours to the best of its ability.

Casting an ominous shadow on the progress that has been made towards peace is the recent wave of terrorism, which has claimed a number of innocent lives and brought untold sorrow to the families of the victims. On this occasion, I should like, on behalf of the Government of Japan, to convey my heartfelt sympathy to those whose lives have been shattered by the hateful acts of terrorists. May the families of the victims find consolation in the knowledge that the tide of history is overwhelmingly against terrorism, and that peace will

ultimately prevail. Concerted action by all the parties in the region is required to combat and eliminate terrorism in all its forms. The international community must back up those efforts with effective and cooperative measures to cut off foreign support for regional terrorist organizations. Although the situation remains fragile, the vast majority of the peoples of the region are tenacious in their struggle for peace. The international community will not allow that struggle to be thwarted.

The ultimate goal of the peace process is not simply the cessation of hostilities; rather, it is the creation of a stable environment in which all the peoples of the region can pursue their livelihood and look forward to a more prosperous future. It is essential that the Palestinian people be able to enjoy tangible and direct benefits of peace. Although considerable progress has been made, the conditions in which Palestinians live in Gaza and the West Bank remain tense, and Palestinians will continue to experience frustration unless they see tangible improvements in their daily lives. The violent clash in Gaza earlier this month between Palestinian civilians and the police force of the Palestinian Authority underscores the fragility of the situation and the desperate and urgent need for assistance from the international community.

There is much more hard work to be done to ensure that Palestinian self-government can actually function in Gaza and Jericho. Thus, it is incumbent upon all of us who want to see peace prevail in the region to extend substantial political and economic support to the Palestinian self-government authorities without further delay. Conscious of this common responsibility of ours, Japan for its part has committed about $200 million for Palestinian assistance efforts over two years. In particular, to help meet the initial cost of administration of the territories, Japan, which is not a direct party to the peace process, has nevertheless been actively participating in joint assistance efforts, offering to allocate $10 million for residential housing for the police force in Gaza, $8.5 million for the Holst Fund for recurrent costs, and $5 million for the clean-up project in Gaza.

On the issue of Arab boycott of Israel, my delegation is gratified to note that in September of this year the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council announced a virtual end to its practice. Japan welcomes and highly appreciates this initiative, since it contributes greatly to the spirit of reconciliation and mutual trust that is growing among the nations of the region. It is the belief of my delegation that it will open enormous trade and investment opportunities, enhancing the economic well-being of all in the region.

As a result of the Madrid Conference of 1991, multilateral talks have started, with working groups on five subjects: the environment, arms control and regional security, refugees, water, and economic development. The talks are expected to address practical problems shared by the nations of the region, and thereby serve to build confidence among the parties involved in the region. In fact, they have already succeeded in starting the process of promoting the development of normal relations among the nations of the Middle East, and are thus playing an important role in advancing peace and stability in the region. Japan has been participating actively and constructively in these working groups.

At its most recent meeting, held in Bahrain last month the environmental Working Group, over which Japan presides as its Chairman, adopted a code of conduct that establishes principles and guidelines for environmental protection and cooperation in the region. Japan believes that this practical achievement will contribute to promoting greater social and economic cooperation in the region, given the degree of interdependence that can exist there.

The Middle East and North African Economic Summit of government officials and leading businessmen, held in Casablanca last month, provides another useful model for promoting economic cooperation for regional development projects. These region-wide efforts reflect a determination to foster an environment in which Palestinians, Israelis and their Arab neighbours can enjoy the fruits of peace. In pursuit of that goal, they have the active and steadfast support of the international community. Japan, for its part, will spare no effort to promote the ongoing peace process in the Middle East and to support and further cooperate in the social and economic development of the region.

Mr. Huaraka (Namibia): In his statement during the general debate, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia, stated:

> "The peace process in the Middle East continues to gain momentum and wider acceptance in the region and beyond it. ... centre-piece of this peace process is ... full realization of the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people, led by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which must lead to complete nationhood." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Plenary Meetings, 21st meeting, p. 21)*

The ongoing peace process, which began in Madrid, and the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements will, hopefully, lead to the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. That is what the world wants, and, even more, that is what the Palestinian people want. Indeed, that is what the region deserves.

In paragraph 1 of resolution 48/158 D of 20 December 1993 the General Assembly:

> "*Reaffirms* the need to achieve a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in all its aspects".

Since that resolution was adopted, positive developments on the Palestinian-Israeli track for the peace process have taken place.

Since the signing by the Government of Israel and the PLO of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, which took place on 13 September 1993 at the White House in Washington, the peace process has achieved significant results and grown deep roots on the way to a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, signed in Cairo on 4 May 1994, and the subsequent launching of early empowerment represent important and irreversible steps forward in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles.

The signing of the Washington Declaration, on 25 July this year, and of the peace Treaty between Israel and Jordan, on 26 October this year, represent yet another historic achievement that will generate further momentum in the Israel-Palestinian negotiations, and encourage progress in the Israel-Lebanese and Israel-Syrian tracks of the peace process.

During past years the Namibian Government followed with keen interest the bilateral negotiations between the parties concerned, and it continues to do so. It is my delegation's fervent hope that the discussions between Israel and the PLO will steadily progress and solidify through the transitional period. Based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), such steps will be important in establishing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

While my delegation is aware that there have been delays in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles and some lack of compliance with the provisions of the agreement reached, such as the absence until now of the safe passage between Gaza and Jericho, it nevertheless hopes for positive progress and would urge full implementation of the Declaration of Principles within the agreed time-frame.

My delegation stresses the need for the United Nations to continue to play an active role in the current peace process and in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles. It is against this background that my delegation welcomes the progress made so far in this regard, particularly in the provision of economic, social and other assistance to the Palestinian people. Now is the most trying time for the Palestinian people, a time when they need to be assisted in order to reconstruct their country. The enjoyment of their economic, social and cultural rights is a crucial component of the realization of their right to self-determination.

My delegation commends the creation of a coordinating mechanism for United Nations activities throughout the occupied territory, through the appointment of the United Nations Special Coordinator at Under-Secretary-General level; it is a welcome development.

My delegation would fail in its duty if it did not congratulate and express its solidarity with the PLO and all the Palestinian people on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. In the same vein, we congratulate the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and his colleagues in the Bureau, on a job well done.

Finally, my Government will continue to give all the support the Secretary-General might require to ensure that the United Nations system contributes its utmost to the economic and social development of the Palestinian people, which is essential in building peace throughout the Middle East.

Mr. Homarah (Yemen) *(interpretation from Arabic):* I hope that the few words I am going to say will not be classified among the footnotes of the voluminous statements made over the years by the Israelis and the Arabs on the question of Palestine. They have made so very many statements and made war for about half a century, then, after all that, they discovered that war does not produce for them or for anyone else any sustainable solutions. I borrow this word "sustainable" from the common coinage of our day which we hear so

much in this Hall in speaking of "sustainable development" for poor countries like mine.

War has not brought anyone anything but destruction and bloodshed. However, as they saying goes in the Arab world, and in Yemen in particular, this seems to be the best that could have been done. The dialogue that is taking place now between the parties to the conflict and the tendency towards peace may achieve what has not been possible to achieve by military force, by high-sounding statements or even by fiery poetry.

My country supports dialogue, calls for peace and is on the side of peace. It follows with great interest the negotiations between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel and the agreements concluded between the two parties. We also follow closely the practical steps taken to achieve all that. We wish to thank and to express our appreciation for the efforts of the United States of America and the Russian Federation have deployed and continue to deploy in order to surmount obstacles, narrow the differences between the negotiators and thereby to promote peace and security in the region.

The peoples of the region have lived for far too long in the grip of instability and war. Now they long for the peace and stability they need so much. Yemen believes that if such is to be achieved, it has to be built on justice and not on force and *faits accomplis*. What has been achieved at both the Palestinian-Israeli and the Israeli-Jordanian tracks is not enough to ensure a durable peace in the region. To achieve such peace, it has to be based on the principle of the complete withdrawal of the Israeli forces from all the occupied Arab territories in Syria and Lebanon in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

While we hope that the Arab-Israeli peace process, which began in Madrid, will usher in a new era in a Middle East that is not threatened by nuclear weapons, we also hope that Israel will take an initiative in this respect that would demonstrate its desire to live in peace on the basis of respect for the rights of the Palestinian people and the acknowledgement of such rights, and not by intimidation, the demolishing of houses and the infliction of collective punishment.

Mr. Farhadi (Afghanistan) *(interpretation from French):* In order to indicate my delegation's position, I shall read out the following message that was communicated to the Secretary-General and signed by the Head of State of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, Professor Rabbani:

> "On the occasion of the Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people, I should like to express the best wishes of the Islamic State of Afghanistan and all the Afghan people for the achievement of a solution to the Palestinian question based on full respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and their right to their own State. Such a solution requires that Israel withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territory, including Al Quds-Al Sharif, that is, Jerusalem."

Members of the Assembly have taken note of, and some have even studied, the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/49/35). Let us remember that that Committee was established on 10 November 1975 and was requested to consider and make recommendations on a programme designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights as recognized by the General Assembly in resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974.

Present circumstances, and indeed the report itself, show quite clearly that that Committee has much more to do. Having said that, I do not need to repeat everything that has been stated here by several of my colleagues. The points that have been made are of major importance. I shall mention one of them: that an authority which agrees to end an occupation of a territory must, above all, put an end to the existence of settlements; one cannot at the same time maintain settlements and end a military occupation. The entire world must be reminded of this.

I should like to emphasize two points which perhaps need some clarification.

First, there is the question of Al Quds, that is, Jerusalem. Al Quds is indeed the capital of Palestine. The Palestinian people have the right to see their capital in Al Quds. That is one of their inalienable rights.

But it is more than that. What is involved here is the major importance of Haram Al-Sharif, in the city of Al-Quds, to all Muslims throughout the world. We must recognize that human rights include spiritual rights — the right of respect for what is sacred. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the forty-sixth anniversary of which we will commemorate in a few days, should make that point clear. It is a question of spiritual rights

and of the right of one spiritual community to the respect, by another spiritual community, of what it holds sacred.

For 14 centuries, up until 1948, Muslims respected the right of Jewish and Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land, because Islam recognizes the sacred origin of Judaism and Christianity. Muslims have received God's command to tell the Jews and the Christians, "Your God is our God". The administration of Islam's places of pilgrimage must be in the hands of those who respect the three religions, that is to say, the Muslims.

In implementation of Security Council resolution 242 (1968), Israel could end its occupation of Al-Quds, which would allow Muslims from around the world to make the pilgrimage freely and without hindrance from an occupying army — a pilgrimage to places that are very important in the Islamic religion.

The second point is Al-Khalil — Hebron — and the Mosque of Abraham. Mention was made here of the killing, on 25 February last, of Muslims who, before sunrise, were fasting and praying to the God of Abraham. The Security Council held several meetings on this question, and countries that are not members of the Council were able to express their views. Indeed, my delegation explained the meaning of the word "Al-Khalil" — that is, "intimate and privileged friend". That is what God called Abraham:

> "For God did take Abraham for a friend" *(The Holy Koran, IV:125)*.

In sura XXII of the Holy Koran, the last two verses tell us that God called upon all believers, not just the Arabs, to proclaim that Muslims belong to the religion of Abraham, that Abraham is spiritual father of all believers — Arab and non-Arab.

(spoke in Arabic)

> "it is the cult of your father Abraham." (The Holy Koran, XXII:78)

(spoke in French)

and that believers were called Muslims by Abraham himself, in the language of his time; the word "Muslim" means "those who submit to God". The Koran, in addressing believers, said that they must be witness to all of humankind on this point.

(spoke in Arabic)

> "Be witnesses for mankind." (The Holy Koran, ibid)

(spoke in French)

It is clear, therefore, that Abraham is the spiritual father of all believers: Jews, Christians and Muslims. It is also clear that ending the occupation of Hebron — Al-Khalil — would allow Muslim pilgrims from throughout the world, as well as Jewish and Christian pilgrims, to visit, without hindrance from an occupying army, those places of pilgrimage, as had been possible for 14 centuries.

To those who feel that my statement has not conformed to the usual United Nations style, and even to non-believers, I would say that the commitment of all Muslims world wide to Haram al-Sharif and to the Mosque of Abraham in Hebron is a cultural and political fact that is of universal scope.

Mr. Remírez de Estenoz Barciela (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The item, "Question of Palestine", has been under consideration by this Organization practically since its inception and it has permanently influenced our activities. Even if this year is no exception, we can congratulate ourselves that it has started to undergo a certain qualitative change as a result of the developments that have taken place after the signature, on 13 September 1993, between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements.

This is a crucial time in the history of the Palestinian people. The process of rebuilding Palestinian society began with the agreements signed in May this year, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and the presence of President Yasser Arafat in Gaza, developments which we welcome. However, much remains to be done in both the political and socio-economic areas.

From the political standpoint, it is essential to ensure, once and for all, universal recognition of the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to have their own State in their own territory, in exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination. It is also essential, therefore, that an end be put to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and that Israel fulfil expeditiously,

totally and comprehensively the provisions and meet the deadlines set out in the Declaration of Principles, in the Cairo Agreement and in all other documents agreed upon by both parties. The cause of peace in the Middle East allows for no procrastination in the fulfilment of agreements nor the creation of any obstacles to that end.

On the other hand, it is also fundamental to ensure the economic viability of Palestine and, consequently, the flow — through the United Nations or otherwise — of all committed financial and material resources necessary to reactivate an economy devastated by decades of war and occupation. We are certain that the sustained assistance of the international community aimed at helping the Palestinian economy flourish will be an important contribution to the achievement of peace and its consolidation, and that it will facilitate the exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to sovereignty and independence.

The United Nations has a special political, legal and moral obligation in this process. Therefore, the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs dealing with the question of Palestine must continue to work towards eliminating those phenomena that still hinder the achievement of a just and lasting peace. In this context, it is particularly important to put an end to such serious developments as the continued proliferation of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, violence, repression and the constant violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people. Israel must recognize the full applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the Palestinian and other occupied Arab territories.

We also hope for the success of the ongoing negotiations for the holding of elections in Palestine, preceded by the withdrawal of all Israeli forces from the occupied territories, as well as those for the expansion of Palestinian autonomy to other areas, especially the West Bank.

We must not forget that the question of Palestine is the core of the Middle East conflict. Hence, ensuring a climate of confidence conducive to a just peace in Palestine and to the exercise of all the rights of its people will be a most effective catalyst for the solution of the other components of that conflict. In this regard, we welcome the signing, on 26 October last, of the peace agreement between Jordan and Israel. We hope that, sooner rather than later, Israel will withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan Height and from the territories it is today usurping in southern Lebanon. Doing so will contribute to the elimination of long-standing sources of tension and to peace, security and stability in the region as a whole.

Finally, allow me to express Cuba's full support for the statements made here by the Permanent Representatives of Senegal and Malta in their respective capacities as Chairman and Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. That Committee, in which my delegation has the honour of participating and which has played an extremely important role in this whole process, now has an even more important function to fulfil. In our view, in addition to continuing to closely monitor compliance with the agreements, it should also throw itself into the task of finding ways and means to contribute to the channelling of international assistance from the most varied sources for the Palestinian people. In other words, it is now time to strengthen the Committee and enhance its capacity for action.

To sum up, it must be stressed that the solidarity traditionally offered by the United Nations to the just Palestinian cause has been one of the most important factors for today's progress towards a peace process that we hope will be irreversible. However, in our opinion, that solidarity is now more important than ever before. The Palestinian people wants the Organization to play a real and effective role in that process, and, for the sake of its own prestige and effectiveness, the United Nations needs to do so. Within its modest means, Cuba is prepared to continue contributing to the attainment of that laudable objective.

Mr. Karim (Bangladesh): My delegation would like to take this opportunity at the very outset to warmly congratulate Ambassador Kéba Birane Cissé and other members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the extraordinary efforts they have made in the preparation and submission of the report (A/49/35) before the General Assembly.

During the course of last two decades the Committee, which was established by the General Assembly in resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, has worked ceaselessly to create and sharpen awareness of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to establish a homeland of their own. The extraordinary to patronage that the Committee has received is testimony to the fact that the legitimate Palestinian cause enjoys widespread support among the members of the international community.

The United Nations has remained the most significant rallying point of support for the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people. The Government and the people of Bangladesh have all along stood for a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to all Middle East problems, including the Palestinian problem, on a basis of fairness and justice. We believe that implementation of the relevant resolutions of the various organs of the United Nations, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), can create a climate conducive to the peaceful and comprehensive solution of the Palestinian problem, as well as other problems in the Middle East.

During the course of the last 15 months we have witnessed a series of dramatic and positive breakthroughs in the Middle East. The signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements on 13 September 1993 between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel and the subsequent Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, signed on 4 May 1994, were the essential first steps towards ushering in an era of peaceful coexistence in the region. The return of Chairman Yasser Arafat to Gaza and Jericho and his assumption of the leadership of the Palestinian self-rule Authority marked the beginning of the march towards the realization of the cherished dream of an independent State. The signing at Erez in August 1994 of the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities was yet another important step towards implementation of the Declaration of Principles. Bangladesh welcomed the signing of the Declaration of Principles and other subsequent agreements worked out between the Palestinian and the Israeli leadership.

None the less, my delegation is greatly concerned at the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands. The issue of dismantling the illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied lands and the status of Jerusalem have yet to be addressed. In recent months there has been a growing number of incidents of violence unleashed on the Palestinians by the Israeli settlers, the worst and most heinous of which was the attack on the innocent worshippers at Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in February of this year. These attacks have generated more violence, thereby threatening the entire peace process. There is an urgent need to understand, therefore, that continued violence could vitiate the climate of understanding that marked the transition towards peaceful coexistence. The continued incarceration of thousands of Palestinian prisoners is yet another obstacle to the peace process. Under the circumstances, we firmly believe that early implementation of the terms of the agreements could contribute towards easing the tension in the Palestinian self-rule area and other occupied territories.

It is universally recognized that the move to establish a lasting political structure in Palestine must be accompanied by economic, social and other measures to give the Palestinian entity viability. Prolonged Israeli occupation has taken a severe toll on the occupied areas in terms of economic degradation and infrastructural damage. It is heartening to note that the international community has demonstrated its willingness to overcome the difficulties faced by the Palestinian people and authorities. The appointment of Ambassador Terje Rod Larsen of Norway as Special Coordinator by the Secretary-General to provide overall guidance and facilitate the effective coordination of international assistance to the Palestinian people in meeting their immediate and long-term needs has been a step in the right direction. We are optimistic that the regional Summit held recently in Casablanca will also generate adequate momentum for coordinating assistance to the Palestinian Authority as well as to other parts of the Middle East.

My delegation believes that progress in other areas of the peace process in the Middle East may generate more positive impulses for resolution of the Palestinian problem. We have therefore welcomed the historic Washington Declaration agreed upon by Jordan and Israel and the subsequent signing of the peace treaty between them on 26 October 1994. We are optimistic that the ongoing efforts to negotiate an understanding between Syria and Israel and between Lebanon and Israel will succeed in the near future.

My delegation remains strongly of the view that it is essential for the United Nations to remain seized of the Palestinian issue and to play a central role in the peace process. We welcome and deeply appreciate the Secretary-General's reaffirmation of the intention to keep the United Nations engaged in advancing the peace process with support by programmes of economic, social and other assistance to the Palestinian authorities and the Palestinian people living in the occupied territories.

We should like to conclude by reaffirming the total commitment and unequivocal support of the Government and people of Bangladesh for the inalienable rights of self-determination of the Palestinian people.

The President (*interpretation from French*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3369

(XXX) of 10 October 1975, I now call upon the Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. Ansay (Organization of the Islamic Conference): I should like to thank you, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to address the General Assembly on an issue of such extreme importance to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). During my most recent address to this body a fortnight ago, I took the occasion to extend to Your Excellency our warmest congratulations on your election, which is indeed a tribute to your very well known personal qualities and vast experience, as well as to your country, Côte d'Ivoire. Allow me to reiterate once again my Organization's assurance that you can count on the full cooperation of the OIC in the fulfilment of your responsibilities.

The question of Palestine has been one of the issues that has received the undivided attention of the United Nations for almost half a century. This Assembly has before it today the last report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in which it recalls once again in no uncertain terms the continuing ordeal of the Palestinians, as well as the new and very encouraging developments in the building of peace in the Middle East. Allow me to express our sincere appreciation to the Committee for its dedicated service under the able and dynamic leadership of Ambassador Cissé of Senegal.

We wish equally to commend the Secretary-General for his untiring efforts to find a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine under the auspices of the United Nations. We should also like to avail ourselves of this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to all the parties involved in the peace process since the convening of the Madrid Conference and before.

Ever since the launching of the Middle East peace process over three years ago, the OIC and its Secretary-General, Dr. Algabid, have affirmed their support of this process, which aims at achieving a just and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine and the conflict in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the land-for-peace formula, as well as the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The cause of Palestine and Al-Quds Al-Sharif remains at the forefront of the concerns of the OIC and its 51 member States. Last year, we witnessed a highly important positive development in the peace process — the signing on 13 September 1993 in Washington of a Declaration of Principles on procedures for self-rule in the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel's recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

This year, amidst many remaining thorny issues, we also observe new positive developments in the Middle East following the implementation of the Cairo Agreement of 4 May on interim self-rule in the occupied Palestinian territories, the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and Jericho area, and the assumption by the Palestinian National Authority of its responsibilities. The Palestinian people have begun the process of developing and reconstructing their national economy and institutions, and also of consolidating their national Authority on their land following the 29 April Israeli-Palestinian economic Protocol. These positive developments constitute an important step towards transferring all powers in the occupied Palestinian territories to the Palestinian national Authority.

Here, I should like to laud the wise leadership of the Palestinian people and the courageous decision taken by President Yasser Arafat, which we deem a big step on the road to achieving a comprehensive and just settlement and ensuring the rights of the Palestinian people.

While welcoming such positive developments, which it considered to be serious steps towards realizing a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East that will enable the Palestinian people to recover their inalienable national rights and will return the occupied territories to their legitimate owners; and while expressing its support of the peace process in the Middle East aimed at finding a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestine question and the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Organization of the Islamic Conference affirms its commitment to the cause of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, the first Qibla of Islam, with all that it stands for in the eyes of the Islamic Ummah, such as religious, historical and ideological values, and the necessity of restoring the city to Palestinian sovereignty. It also affirms that a just and comprehensive peace can be achieved only with a full Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and with the restoration of the inalienable legitimate national and political rights of the Palestinian people, including their rights to return, to self-determination and to establish their independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

The OIC also reaffirms its commitment to the issue of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, which, being part of the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, is the Organization's prime cause, and to the necessity of its restoration to Palestinian sovereignty as capital of the State of Palestine as a guarantee of peace and security in the region.

Moreover, at this stage the States members of the OIC would like to see positive developments on the political side reflected in the situation in the occupied territories through termination of the process of settlement and the acts of repression and inhuman practices and procedures to which the Palestinian people in these territories are being subjected. They would also like to see an end put to the continuous violations of the Islamic holy places, of which the partition of the Ibrahimi Holy Mosque in the city of Hebron is a recent example. These steps are necessary to the rebuilding of trust and confidence.

We should also like to note here our support for the other agreements reached within the framework of the peace process — especially the Peace Treaty between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Israel, which was signed lately. Now that the era of peace has come to the Middle East, the international community is requested to affirm its solidarity with the Palestinian people and to provide them with all kinds of political and economic support in their struggle to regain their inalienable political rights and to establish the long-sought just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

In this context, the OIC's annual coordination meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, which was held in New York on 3 October 1994, welcomed all these positive developments in the Middle East peace process and reaffirmed the need to make progress on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks with a view to arriving at a just, comprehensive and final settlement on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the principle of land for peace — a settlement that would guarantee full Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories.

The meeting also reiterated the need to adhere to all United Nations resolutions calling for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the need to put an end to Israeli occupation of and settlements on Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as the occupied Lebanese territories.

The meeting reaffirmed the importance of the role of the United Nations in the peace process and expressed appreciation for the work of the United Nations agencies in the occupied Palestinian territories. It invited these agencies to intensify their assistance to the Palestinian people to enable them to rebuild their economy and institutions. It also reaffirmed that Al-Quds Al-Sharif, with its national and religious significance, remains a fundamental issue for all Islamic States — one that can be neither ignored nor forgotten — and that the restoration of Al-Quds Al-Sharif to Palestinian and Islamic sovereignty is necessary.

We look forward to the implementation of the agreement between the PLO and Israel proceeding without any delay whatsoever and unhindered, as planned. I refer in particular to Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank and to the holding of free elections at the earliest possible date.

We also see the necessity of a major role for the United Nations and its organs, especially United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), in the peace process. We believe, too, that the United Nations should shoulder its entire responsibility in all fields for realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, implementation of the relevant international resolutions and the provision of support for the peace process as well as for the agreement concluded between the parties concerned as a means of guaranteeing and executing such arrangements.

In this connection, the OIC calls on the international community to increase its support for the activities of UNRWA to enable it to carry out its mandate effectively. At the same time, we should like to urge that all Member States comply fully with all the resolutions adopted by the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Labour Organization and the World Health Organization pertaining to the question of Palestine and the situation in the occupied territories.

The Palestinian people have suffered long years of occupation, repression and denial of the opportunity to exercise their national rights. Now that a new dawn has broken in the Middle East and the time has come to reap the fruits of the Palestinian struggle, the international community is called upon, especially on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which is being celebrated today, to affirm this

solidarity and to extend all forms of support to these people until they are able to live in freedom and dignity in the land of their fathers and forefathers. to have their inalienable rights restored and to establish their independent State.

The establishment of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East requires that the efforts of the international community be united and that its energies be mobilized to ensure security and peace in the region. These steps would constitute major support for international peace and security, which may be realized through the consolidation of Palestinian authority over all the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and the extension of all types of support to the Palestinian people.

It is incumbent on all of us, during this crucial period, to continue to extend all types of assistance to the PLO to enable it to confront the coming phase and establish its authority and national institutions. This requires that the international community provide the Palestinian people with support in the economic and material spheres and in all other fields until they complete the process of reconstructing their national economy and rebuilding the infrastructure.

In conclusion I should like, on this occasion, on behalf of the OIC, to applaud the glorious Palestinian people, while affirming the Islamic Ummah's solidarity with them in their just and legitimate struggle under their legitimate and sole representative — the Palestine Liberation Organization — until they are able to restore their inalienable national rights, including their right to return to self-determination and establish their independent Palestinian State on their national soil with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Three years ago, on a similar occasion, I said from this rostrum that the Organization of the Islamic Conference yearned for the day when the flag of Palestine would be unfurled over its own territory and would wave proudly here also, amidst those of the other Members of the United Nations, and that when that day came Israel too would be able to enjoy the sweet taste of recognition and cherish the blessings of peace. Well, that day, I believe, is not now far away.

The President *(interpretation from French)*: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I should like to inform Members that the Assembly will consider draft resolutions to be submitted under agenda item 40 at a later date, which will be announced in the *Journal*.

Agenda item 38

The situation in the Middle East: reports of the Secretary-General (A/49/556, A/49/636)

The President *(interpretation from French)*: I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on item 38 be closed in half an hour. If I hear no objection it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

Mr. Cissé (Senegal) *(interpretation from French)*: It is now a little more than one year since, on 13 September 1993, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel committed the Middle East region to a decisive turning-point in its history: on that date, after mutually recognizing each other, they signed the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, including its annexes, and the Memorandum of Agreement thereto.

Major progress realized throughout this year in implementing the provisions of this basic Agreement, in particular the provisions relating to the transition period, have, despite numerous stumbling-blocks and snares, contributed to gradually giving shape to the process courageously embarked upon by the Palestinian and Israeli leaders.

It is in this context that we must place the signing in Cairo, on 4 May 1994, of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, and also the signing of the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities, which took place at Erez on 29 August 1994.

The results of these two Agreements represent notable progress, marking the beginning of Palestinian autonomy in the relevant zones of the occupied Palestinian territory. They reflect also the will of the parties concerned to advance firmly towards a peaceful and negotiated settlement of the Palestine question on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

In this respect the many incidents that, unfortunately, have marked the course of events in recent months, demonstrate — if ever there was a need to do so — the importance, in this period of complex and delicate transition, of showing our unfailing support for the leaders of the region who chose the difficult road of peace. We must especially translate that support into concrete acts that would, for the immense majority of the populations in the region who desire peace, restore the hope of a better tomorrow.

With regard to the Palestinian populations in the occupied territories in particular, whose commitment, support and participation are indispensable to the success of the peace process, the support of the international community to meet the multiple humanitarian needs and promote development is becoming more crucial today than ever because it, determines to a large degree, the capacity of those populations to resist the temptation of extremism.

In this delicate phase of peace-building, the greatest threat to peace lies in the continuing deterioration of the economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and in the scourges of poverty, unemployment and the breakdown of infrastructures that foment despair and violence.

That is why we believe that the United Nations should become deeply involved in the peace process and in the establishment and consolidation of the nascent Palestinian Authority. In this regard, we welcome the appointment by the Secretary-General of a Special Coordinator and the convening of an inter-organization meeting which brought together the representatives of 17 institutions and programmes of the United Nations in order to adopt an integrated and coherent approach to supporting the economic and social development of the region.

Given the enormity of the tasks in all areas and the need rapidly to achieve the total implementation of the Washington Declaration, the United Nations efforts must be sustained and accompanied immediately by the unblocking of funds promised by the donor countries in Washington on 1 October 1993 to finance various projects in the period from 1994 to 1998.

During this complex and delicate transitional period it is also important — as was emphasized by His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal, in his message on 29 November 1994 to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, on the occasion of the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People — that we reaffirm that it is the responsibility of the United Nations to remain permanently involved until all aspects of the question of Palestine are settled on the basis of the principles laid down by the United Nations in its relevant resolutions. These include: the withdrawal of Israel from Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and other occupied Arab territories; respect for the rights of all States of the region to live in peace within safe and internationally recognized borders; and the recognition and exercise of the national and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in particular their right to self-determination.

The emphasis put on the "Question of Palestine" is the result of the unanimously shared conviction that this question is at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict and that only its global, just and lasting settlement will lay the basis for true peace in the Middle East.

From this point of view, the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have already begun to show their fundamental importance by instilling a dynamism in the region which led to the signing, on 25 July 1994, of the peace treaty between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

We hope that the Israeli-Lebanese and the Israeli-Syrian negotiations will quickly lead to results which will consolidate the basis for peace in the Middle East. The road ahead is long and full of traps but the establishment of a just and lasting peace is no longer a pipe dream. We owe this to the courage and wisdom of the region's leaders, for whom the awarding of the Nobel Prize is recognition of their shared efforts.

It is up to us to help them breathe life into this much desired peace for the benefit of all the peoples of the region and to achieve the grand design of definitive peace.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Middle East region is currently witnessing the beginning of a new era in the contemporary history of a region that has known many wars and conflicts in the recent past. The peace process which started at the Madrid Conference three years ago and led to mutual recognition and the Declaration of Principles between the PLO and Israel, was followed by several agreements and steps which were taken by both sides to implement the Declaration. Also a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel was signed in October 1994.

Although these positive developments have not resulted yet on the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace in the region, any observer of the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict cannot but recognize the magnitude of the historical achievements that have been made over the past few years. The greatest of those achievements was, undoubtedly, the agreement by all parties that the objective of the negotiations is the full implementation of the terms of reference of the peace process, namely Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) in their real content which stipulates the establishment of comprehensive peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours in return for the withdrawal by Israel from all the Arab territories it occupied in 1967 and the exercise by the Palestinian people of all its legitimate national rights.

Direct negotiations immediately followed and led to the withdrawal of Israeli forces from some occupied Palestinian territories. Last year, progress continued to be made by the parties negotiating with varying degrees of success between the various tracks. Despite the difficulties that face the negotiation process, and the fact that extremists are trying to thwart it, it continues.

Mr. Seniloli (Fiji), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We cannot delude ourselves with the belief that continued progress in the peace process will take place automatically or that it is inevitable. We believe that all the parties concerned should give added momentum to the negotiations since the widespread support the peace process has elicited so far stemmed from the increasing expectation that the peace process will lead to restoring all lands and rights in full, to putting an end to the shedding of innocent blood, to initiating regional cooperation on arms control and development of the economies of the countries of the region in order to raise the living standards of their peoples and alleviate the suffering of those who have been exhausted by the burden of continued occupation. Undoubtedly, every day that passes without tangible progress that brings us closer to the realization of these expectations will lead to more extremism and violence.

We believe that the attainment of comprehensive peace requires imminent progress on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks, that would ensure full restoration of Syria's sovereignty over all its occupied territories in the Golan and ensure the full and sincere implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) on Southern Lebanon.

Peace is indivisible. If all parties are sincere in their desire for peace and their intentions are genuine, the peoples of the region will be prepared to make any sacrifices that may be necessary to achieve comprehensive peace.

When Egypt initiated the experiment of peace, it did so in very difficult circumstances indeed and had to make many sacrifices. However, this did not deter us from pursuing the peace option. Today, the provisions of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, which constitute the sound interpretation of the equation of 'comprehensive peace in return for all the land taken by force' stand-out as a towering monument and an example to be followed. We in Egypt are rightfully proud of this pioneering experiment without which, the current peace process could never have begun and could never have succeeded.

Egypt continues to deploy every possible effort in support of the peace negotiations. We are now hosting Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on the implementation of the Declaration of Principles. At the same time, we urge Israel and all the other parties to achieve similar progress on the other negotiating tracks. We are also active participants in the multilateral negotiations on regional cooperation in the Middle East, which could provide a strong incentive for all parties to make progress in bilateral negotiations with a view to promoting the desired regional cooperation.

The multilateral negotiations are very important, because they foreshadow the nature of future relations in the region. Egypt hopes they will contribute to achieving the objective my country has often advocated here in the General Assembly and outside the United Nations: namely, the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free from nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. Egypt has also called repeatedly for renouncing hegemony designs, doctrines of military superiority and the occupation of territory as a means of ensuring security. We have also stressed that a comprehensive peace is the sole genuine guarantee of the security of all parties.

The possession of nuclear weapons by a Middle Eastern country is a spectre that threatens the security and stability of the entire region and increases the possibility of the proliferation of such weapons to other countries in the region. Therefore, Egypt calls upon Israel to enter into serious negotiations on nuclear disarmament, to agree to place its nuclear installations

under international safeguards, and to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). As Israel has not yet agreed to begin negotiations on nuclear-arms control in the context of the multilateral arms-control task force, we hope that Israel will quickly take practical tangible steps to build confidence in this field. The NPT review conference scheduled for next year will be a true test of the Treaty's credibility and universality.

We in Egypt hope that it will soon be possible to look upon United Nations documents on the Middle East conflict as mere historical reference material. We hope they will constitute an unambiguous record of unswerving devotion to the principles that regulate the settlement of disputes, particularly with respect to issues on which negotiations have not yet started and which, we hope, will be negotiated soon: namely the issues of Al Quds, refugees and the settlements. We call upon the General Assembly to continue to support the firm principles upon which a comprehensive, just settlement of the conflict in the Middle East should be founded.

We in Egypt believe that such a settlement will create a new reality in the Middle East, one that will usher in an era of stability, prosperity and fruitful cooperation which will benefit all the peoples of the region.

Mr. Al-Suwaidi (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I am pleased to address the Assembly on behalf of the United Arab Emirates on agenda item 38, "The situation in the Middle East". I wish at the outset to thank the Secretary-General for his commendable efforts to achieve comprehensive peace in the Middle East region.

The international community has been unanimous in welcoming the signing of the Declaration of Principles by Israel and the PLO, in the Washington Declaration ending the state of belligerency between Israel and Jordan, and in a variety of other agreements, bilateral talks and other measures. All of this constitutes a first step towards a just and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of international legality as represented by the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

While my country has welcomed the convening of the Madrid Conference and the beginning of bilateral talks, and has been taking part in multilateral discussions, it has reiterated in the statement of its Foreign Minister in this Hall, the importance it attaches to achieving constructive results in the talks between Israel on the one hand and Syria and Lebanon on the other, which have not yet succeeded owing to Israel's failure to honour its commitments under the principles of the Middle East peace process, which are based on the land-for-peace principle and on complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories, including the holy city of Al-Quds, the Syrian Golan Heights and southern Lebanon, in compliance with international resolutions, especially Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

The entire international community has long held that the question of Palestine is at the very core of the Middle East conflict.

This means that the two questions are intertwined and interrelated and cannot be separated one from the other. In the light of this fact, it is clear that in order for the peace process to move forward towards a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to this conflict, it is necessary for the international community to continue to deploy more efforts to push for peace and eliminate all the obstacles and difficulties that obstruct the road to peace.

It goes without saying that among the *sine qua non* conditions to see success crown the efforts made in the Middle East, it is necessary to strive to achieve an environment of trust and ensure that the political will exists among all the negotiating parties to work for peace. This cannot be achieved in the absence of any evidence that Israel credibly intends to honour the commitments it took upon itself at the Madrid Conference. It goes without saying that the steps taken towards peace thus far are but the beginning of a very lengthy road full of political, economic and security hurdles.

In order for the progress achieved in the peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to lead to success, Israel must honour all the commitments it has taken upon itself because peace-building needs the achievement of concrete results regarding the main issues involved in the Middle East situation and the question of Palestine. Foremost among those issues are the questions of the holy city of Al-Quds, of the settlements, of the return of refugees to their homes, of the restoration of Syria's sovereignty over the Golan Heights and of the full sovereignty of Lebanon over all its territory.

Consequently, Israel should demonstrate its peaceful intentions by making it possible to solve all pending questions in accordance with the principles of the Charter, the resolutions of international legality and the norms of international law.

We hope that the bilateral and multilateral negotiations will lead to the creation of a new political climate marked by a desire to engage in dialogue in resolving disputes and conflicts and that such climate will promote peace, security and development at the regional and the international levels alike.

In conclusion, may I reaffirm the importance we attach to the performance by the United Nations and its specialized agencies which have been seized of the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East for a long time of their role in pushing the on-going peace process forward in all its developmental, political, economic and social aspects in order to achieve peace, security and stability in the Middle East. Such peace must be based on justice, equality and respect for human rights so that the peoples of the region may live in peace and security and thereby achieve progress and prosperity.

We hope that the General Assembly will adopt the draft resolutions before it because of the great political importance of these resolutions which embody a significant political mechanism that is essential to the achievement of a just and comprehensive settlement in the region.

Mr. Yacobi (Israel): Far-reaching changes are reshaping the Middle East. The speed and extent of this transformation are unmatched in the world today.

Israel and its neighbours have established relations through various tracks of the peace process: with the Palestinians, with Jordan, and with States of the Persian Gulf and North Africa. The multilateral negotiations are bearing fruit as a framework for regional cooperation. We continue to look forward to progress with Syria and Lebanon.

In one short year, the Declaration of Principles signed on 13 September 1993 by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has turned from concept to dynamic reality. On 4 May 1994, the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area was signed by the parties in Cairo. It began the implementation on the ground of the Declaration of Principles. On 13 May 1994, the Israel Defence Forces withdrew from Jericho. Five days later, on 18 May 1994, they completed their withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Police immediately assumed responsibility for the security of Palestinians in these areas. Three months later, on 29 August 1994, we signed the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities. This early empowerment agreement transfers from the Israeli military government and its civil administration to the Palestinian Authority powers and responsibilities in five spheres: education, welfare, tourism, health and direct taxation.

Jordan and Israel successfully completed the process begun in Madrid. A step towards this end was taken on 25 July 1994, with the signing of the Washington Declaration. This agreement ended the state of war between the two countries. It was soon followed by one of the crowning achievements of the peace process: the treaty of peace signed on the Israeli-Jordanian border on 26 October 1994.

Progress towards peace and cooperation has also been made in relations between Israel and other Arab States. On 1 September 1994, Israel and Morocco signed an agreement to open liaison offices in each other's country. On 3 October 1994, Israel and Tunisia agreed to exchange liaison officers. The Gulf States further paved the way for regional economic cooperation by declaring an end to the secondary and tertiary Arab boycott.

The Economic Summit that recently convened in Casablanca, Morocco, reflected the desire of countries in the region to establish economic cooperation. There was consensus among the conference participants that boycotts are incompatible with this goal. As was stated in the Casablanca Declaration:

> "The participants ... explored how best to accelerate the development of the region and overcome, as soon as possible, obstacles, including boycotts and all barriers to trade and investment. All agreed that there is a need to promote increased investment from inside and outside the region. They noted that such investment requires free movement of goods, capital and labour across the borders ... In this context, the participants noted favourably the decision of the Gulf Cooperation Council regarding the lifting of the secondary and tertiary aspects of the boycott of Israel." (*A/49/645, para. 6*)

The boycott is an obsolete economic weapon whose main casualty is regional prosperity, and we hope to see it abolished soon in its entirety.

The Casablanca conference ensured that both the public and the private sectors would have a voice in shaping new economic arrangements for the region. Representatives of 60 Governments and the Palestinian Authority participated in this summit. They were joined by over 1,100 business leaders from around the world, including hundreds of Israelis and Arabs. The Casablanca conference broke down walls of mistrust. In their place it cemented the foundations of economic cooperation in the Middle East. Arab, Israeli and other businessmen met each other face to face. They exchanged ideas and discussed proposals.

All these developments represent a dramatic turning-point for the Middle East, for the relations between Israel and its neighbours and for the creation of a better future which all people in the region can enjoy.

We are witnessing important steps towards peace. But, at the same time, we see an opposing trend towards radicalization and violence. It imperils the entire region. Today we witnessed yet another act of terrorism against innocent Israeli citizens. A terrorist affiliated with Hamas and armed with an axe brutally murdered a young woman in northern Israel several hours ago. Liat Gabai died of her wounds on the way to the hospital. She was 19 years old.

Radical fundamentalist organizations threaten the stability of Governments and States, terrorizing innocents without distinction. Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah have raised the cry of "jihad", or holy war, against all so-called infidels. They, together with similar organizations, are active in every corner of the Middle East and beyond: in Algeria, Sudan, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, in the areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority, in Israel, and even in Argentina, the United Kingdom and the United States. Their primary goal is to establish a radical religious empire, in their own words "from the Atlantic Ocean to China."

In the meantime, they focus on the elimination of peace. For this, they enlist financial support from backers in the United States, Europe and other places, but they rely primarily upon Iran. Yet, even though this fact is well known, many countries still maintain elaborate ties with the Iranian regime, including selling it arms and other military equipment and giving it technological, economic and financial assistance.

Will the region move towards peace and cooperation, as the peacemakers desire? Or will it be drawn backward into the shadows of conflict and bloodshed, as promised by the radical fundamentalists? Political agreements are the first steps towards ensuring peace. Then, all peoples of the region must be able to enjoy the great social and economic potential it offers.

A peaceful environment will enable all countries in the Middle East to divert their human energies and economic resources away from conflict and towards social and economic development. The combined cost of defence in our region is about $70 billion annually. Of this, it is estimated that $30 billion could be saved each year — if there were peace. This money could then be invested in education, health, human progress, science, technology and more — if there were peace. The result would be a higher standard of living and a better quality of life for all peoples.

I believe that there is no other solution but genuine cooperation in our region. Partnerships in the fields of health and technology, joint ventures in industrial and resource development — these are just two of the possibilities which peace can make a reality. Eventually, regional cooperation could pave the way for a Middle East common market.

The dream of regional cooperation is steadily becoming a reality. Having signed a peace treaty with Jordan, we are now seeking to bring the benefits of peace to both peoples. We are working with Jordan to find ways of jointly developing shared resources. The opportunities are enormous: exploitation of mineral resources in the Dead Sea, agricultural development in the Arava valley, and integration of infrastructures in the sister cities of Aqaba and Eilat, which meet on the Red Sea. As a first step, we have begun work on linking electricity grids in certain areas, saving money and increasing efficiency.

Israel and Jordan have also agreed to establish an Eilat-Aqaba free tourism zone. The area lends itself to joint development of the sites, blending the arid desert climate with water-based recreational facilities and the natural wonders of the Gulf of Aqaba. Development of the region for tourism could serve as a basis for cooperation between Israel, Jordan, Egypt and, eventually, Saudi Arabia and, of course, the Palestinian Authority. The inspiring contrast of red desert mountains, pale blue skies and indigo waters could make the Red Sea riviera a favourite escape for vacationers from around the world.

In Eilat and Aqaba, Israel and Jordan are also exploring the creation of a free-trade zone, based on the principle of the free flow of goods between countries. Such a free-trade zone could eventually be expanded to include all of Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority and nearby countries.

Progress is also being made in the multilateral negotiations. These talks bring together Israel and many other countries in the Middle East to encourage regional cooperation in five fields: environmental protection, development of water resources, economic cooperation, arms control and regional security, and refugees.

The road before us is long, but our destination is clear: peace and reconciliation, cooperation and prosperity. This is the key to a better future for the people of the Middle East. It is not only the key to ending the suffering and loss of human life, but also the key to a new hope in the hearts of all.

Now is the time to resolve the plight of the four Israeli soldiers who remain missing in action: Tzvi Feldman, Zachariah Baumel, Yehuda Katz and Ron Arad. We call upon those countries and organizations holding them to abide by international law and to display humanitarian sensitivity in order to prevent further suffering by the soldiers and their families.

The international community bears a solemn responsibility: to assist in bringing about this profound change. It can do this by supporting the States and parties that are turning towards the future and by stopping those that would destroy the great opportunity that has opened before us. This is a historic opportunity and a momentous challenge. May we all rise to the occasion.

Mr. Abdul Momin (Brunei Darussalam): On behalf of my delegation, may I first congratulate all those whose courage and vision are responsible for the positive developments in the Middle East. The past few years have seen a welcome change in the relations between the Arabs and the Israelis. This can be regarded as part of the peace dividend resulting from the end of the cold war.

We compliment those responsible for the peace process, from its beginning at the Madrid Peace Conference to the diplomacy required to achieve the latest successes. We have now seen the historic signing of a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel. This is an important turning-point in the relationship between the two countries. It is a most welcome demonstration of the willingness of all parties to cooperate.

At the same time, there have been moves which have opened up the possibility of reaching a just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian problem. The peace process has so far led to Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho. We hope that Palestinian authority will be extended to more areas in the West Bank. Before this can be achieved, however, the Palestinians will face the difficult tasks of economic reconstruction and social development. More than ever, they need international assistance and we hope that this will be forthcoming. We are nevertheless confident that they will ultimately succeed in building an independent State of Palestine.

However, there may still be a long and difficult way ahead before an eventual comprehensive settlement of all Middle East problems is secured. In this respect, we are pleased that the next stage towards achieving such comprehensive peace is under way. It is good to see that negotiations are taking place between Syria and Israel, and we would like to see similar talks between Lebanon and Israel. We fully support Syria's efforts to seek a complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Golan Heights. In terms of a settlement of the Lebanon issues, the Government and the people of Brunei Darussalam wish to see an agreement leading to a full Israeli withdrawal from the buffer zone that it occupies in south Lebanon.

The peace process must continue if a just and lasting solution to the Middle East problem is to be reached. We encourage all parties concerned to take the opportunity that the prevailing international climate offers.

Mr. Buallay (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The establishment and maintenance of peace in the Middle East are of paramount importance to all the countries of the world because of their implications for all other regions. The Middle East is one of the world's most sensitive regions, in addition to its importance and the effect it has on international peace and security. In order for peace and security to reign in the region, the international community must find a peaceful, just, equitable and comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Bahrain wishes to reiterate the firm belief that it will never be possible to achieve any just and peaceful settlement to the conflict in the region so long as the solution is piecemeal and incomplete. This has been

stressed by His Excellency, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, in his statement to the General Assembly on 6 October, in which he stated:

> "The peace process should be comprehensive and integrated, for it would be futile to focus on achieving peace and development in one part of the region while leaving unresolved problems of others." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Plenary Meetings, 20th meeting, p. 6)*

Therefore, it is necessary, in the interests of a comprehensive and just settlement in the region, that equal attention be paid to all the tracks that lead to such settlement. In this respect, we call upon Israel to implement Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) which call for withdrawal by Israel from the occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif. In seeking a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, my delegation underscores the fact that as the question of Palestine is at the core of the conflict in the region, it is essential that any peaceful settlement should be coupled with an integral approach that focuses on enabling the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights.

Bahrain's welcome for the Madrid Peace Conference and its hosting of the sixth round of the Multilateral Working Group on the Environment on 25 and 26 October, stemmed from its conviction that the peace process in the Middle East must be supported if a just and comprehensive solution to all the problems of the region is to be found. Furthermore, Bahrain considered the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in Washington, D.C. on 13 September 1993 a first step towards a just and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. In this respect, I wish to make it clear that the Palestinian people's right to self-determination is a quintessential principle that must be taken fully into account in the peace negotiations, if they are to lead ultimately to a peace that secures the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to establish its national independent State.

Since the signing of the Declaration of Principles, developments have followed on the heels of another. There has been the signing of the self-rule Agreement in Cairo on 4 May 1994, the entry of the Palestinian Authority into the Gaza Strip and Jericho, the signing by Jordan and Israel on 25 July of the Washington Declaration and, later, of the peace treaty between the two countries on 26 October 1994. For all this, we have not noticed any real progress in the negotiations on the Syrian track. Any solution to be reached on this track must include full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan and the dismantling of the settlements in compliance with the resolutions of international legality. In this respect, my delegation wishes to declare its support for the position of the Syrian Arab Republic in demanding the return of its full sovereignty over its territories occupied since 1967 in the Golan.

On the other hand, parts of the territory of Lebanon are still under Israeli occupation. While confirming our commitment to the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Lebanon within internationally recognized borders, we call upon Israel to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978) on the unconditional withdrawal of its troops from the Lebanese territory.

The issue of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is of paramount importance to us because of its serious implications for the security and stability of the region. The continuing nuclear programmes of Israel without any international control do not serve the cause of peace and security in the Middle East. Therefore, my delegation maintains that it is necessary for Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to place all its nuclear facilities under the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency. This is an essential prerequisite of the confidence-building that is one of the cornerstones of the peace process, and the means of serving the interests of our present and future generations.

If the peace process in the Middle East is brought to fruition in the form of a just and comprehensive peace on all tracks, it will contribute to ending a political conflict that has lasted for far too long, with all the wars and confrontations it has spawned. Therefore stability in the area has always been the aspiration of all the region's people, provided it was founded on justice. Stability, however, is not an end in itself; rather, it is a bridge to the economic and social development that the peoples of the region seek so that they may invest their resources in progress and prosperity.

Mr. Allagany (Saudi Arabia) *(interpretation from Arabic):* The General Assembly considers the question of the Middle East today at an important juncture in the history of the region. The peace process that was begun in Madrid has led to agreements between the PLO and Israel, a Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-

Government Arrangements, Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, the creation of the Palestinian Authority in that area and the conclusion of an Agreement between Jordan and Israel.

The developments in the Middle East constitute a new beginning in the efforts aimed at finding a comprehensive all-embracing solution to the conflict that has racked the region for far too long. These unprecedented developments which, in the past, were considered impossible, have been made possible by the international situation that took shape after the end of the cold war.

The Government of Saudi Arabia is intent on playing its full role on the international scene with a view to helping create the circumstances that will lead us all to the peace, liberty and security to which we all aspire after. The foundations of our current world order acquire their legality and authority from the same principles and ideals that inspired the United Nations Charter and the concepts and resolutions of international legality. Therefore, the peace process that began in Madrid in 1991 on the basis of the two relevant Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), must continue on the basis of these two resolutions and ensure the transfer of competence to the Palestinian authorities in the remainder of the West Bank of the Palestinian territory and must lead also to significant progress in the negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

The question of the occupied Arab Syrian Golan is clear enough and is governed by the principle of respect for international borders. Moreover, security cannot be achieved by the acquisition of land by force but, rather, by laying the foundations of peace. And those foundations will not exist unless Israel withdraws completely from the occupied Syrian Golan. As for Southern Lebanon, this is an issue that is governed by Security Council 452 (1978) which clearly stipulates total, immediate and unconditional withdrawal by Israel from the Lebanese territory. Consequently, we demand immediate and unconditional implementation of the provisions of this resolution.

The question of the Holy City of Al-Quds, the first of the two Qiblas and the third holy site of Islam, represents the essence of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Consequently, we must affirm that no lasting peace could be achieved in the Middle East without a just solution to this question on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 252 (1968). Therefore, Israel must not make any demographic changes that may alter the characteristics of the Holy City or affect future negotiations on its permanent status.

My country attaches importance to the multilateral negotiations in the context of the peace process that began in Madrid and considers that they complement bilateral negotiations but are not a substitute for them. My country hopes that the negotiations on arms control will lead to the creation of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East and rid the region of all weapons of mass destruction. In the context of comprehensive peace the dangers of the proliferation of nuclear weapons would pose a threat to the future of the whole region. Therefore, Israel must enter into serious negotiations on nuclear disarmament; accept to place its nuclear facilities under the international safeguards regime and accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The Government of Saudi Arabia has called for the renunciation of hegemonistic concepts, of military superiority postures and of the occupation of lands as a means of guaranteeing security. We have affirmed that comprehensive peace is the true guarantor of the safety and security of all parties.

We welcome the willingness of the United Nations to play a much larger role in the provision of assistance in various social and economic fields in the Middle East. The Organization's contribution is indispensable if peace is to be built in the entire region. We welcome also the appointment of Ambassador Larsen of Norway as the United Nations Special Coordinator in the occupied territories. We consider that the measures adopted by the United Nations are positive and conducive to the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

We are convinced that the peace process must go hand in hand with measures that will build the confidence between the peoples of the region. We look forward to the adoption by the international community and, in particular, by the two co-sponsors of the Peace Conference, the United States of America and the Russian Federation, of step that will ensure the success of the peace process that began in Madrid on the basis of Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) so that we may usher in an era of tranquility, stability, prosperity and progress in the Middle East.

Mr. Razali (Malaysia): The political topography of the Middle East has continued to change following the historic September 1993 PLO-Israel Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. Less than five weeks ago, Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty, giving rise to hopes for progress in the

Israeli-Lebanese and Israeli-Syrian tracks of the peace process. These are significant and welcome developments, given the history of violence and warfare that has characterized the Arab-Israeli conflict in our times.

Malaysia, like the other Members of the United Nations, is pleased with the assumption by the Palestinian Authority of its tasks in the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area, under the leadership of Mr. Yasser Arafat. We view this as a first step towards the full realization of a just and comprehensive settlement leading to the withdrawal of Israel from Al-Quds Al-Sharif and all the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories. United Nations resolutions, including Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), provide the framework and basis for a just and durable solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The PLO-Israel and Jordan-Israel agreements demonstrate that peace is no longer elusive in the region. It is too early, however, to conclude that the peace process is irreversible. Peace remains fragile, confronted by various challenges and pitfalls. There are many distractions and detractors to the peace process. Peace must be nurtured by the leaders and people in the region, together with the active and tangible support and involvement of the international community. Peace and the fruits of peace are long awaited benedictions for the people of the Middle East, Arabs and Jews. Like other regions in the world, peace in the Middle East must mean the flowering of development, full expression of the rights and empowerment of the people and commitments to equity and social justice.

Since Israel is still occupying Arab lands, it has an important responsibility. Israel must not be seen as compounding the difficulties of the Palestinians and those under Israeli occupation. The Israeli Government must show its sincerity in the implementation of the peace accord and not be distracted nor diverted by extremists mounting challenges to the peace process. The difficult questions, as yet unresolved, must be addressed, including the question of Jerusalem and illegal settlers in Arab lands.

While welcoming progress towards peace in the Middle East, my delegation remains concerned over the various acts of violence perpetrated in the occupied territories which have led to many casualties among the civilians. This situation, if allowed to continue, could set back the peace process. It is imperative that every effort be made to avoid the occurrence of acts of violence in the occupied territories, as well as other parts of the region. In this regard, my delegation is pleased to note that the presence of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) have to a certain extent contributed to stability in the region. It is also important that all parties to the conflict exercise restraint and display a firm commitment to the overall objective of peace so as not to aggravate the situation and delay the implementation of the peace agreements.

Real and lasting peace is more than just the absence of war. Peace is meaningless if there is still hunger and starvation among the population. For peace to endure, the basic needs of the population would have to be urgently addressed.

The various initiatives taken by the Secretary-General to enhance economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people is commendable. We welcome the assurances given by the Secretary-General that he

> "will also make every effort to ensure that the United Nations system contributes its utmost in the fields of economic and social development, which will be essential in building peace throughout the region" *(A/49/636, para. 8)*.

Certainly, all these programmes and projects cannot be implemented without adequate financial resources. The Conference to Support Middle East Peace held in Washington on 1 October last year pledged some $2.4 billion in economic assistance to the occupied territories for the five-year transition period from 1994 to 1999. Despite all those promises and pledges made, it is indeed disappointing to note that only a fraction has so far been delivered. Surely, this situation cannot be tolerated as it undermines the courageous decisions taken by the Arab and Israeli leaders. Whatever the explanation for the delay, at this crucial stage, the donor countries have to be more responsive to the urgent need for the rapid delivery of assistance to the Palestinian people. The leadership and statesmanship displayed by the leaders in the region deserves every support and encouragement from the international community.

Malaysia will continue to render its support to the Palestinians in their efforts to reconstruct their land and to build a democratic society. Malaysia has consistently voiced its support for a comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict, one that would bring lasting peace and stability to all the countries in the region, in line with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Consistent with our support for the peace process, Malaysia was represented by our Foreign Minister at the Economic Summit for the Middle East and North Africa held recently in Casablanca. The convening of such a Summit was timely and broke new ground, thus deserving our appreciation. The Summit for the first time managed to bring Governments and business leaders from Israel and the Arab world together. In this regard, my delegation wishes to reaffirm our support to the contents of the Casablanca Declaration which among others, emphasized the role of the business community in the peace process. We feel that the business sector too has a major, if not a pivotal, role to play in the Middle East peace efforts by participating directly in the reconstruction and in the promotion of trade and investment of the countries in that region. In order for the Palestinians to build a viable economy with the cooperation of the neighbouring countries, it is important that the borders of the Palestinian territories be kept open for labour, tourism and trade. The next economic summit, which should take place in the first half of next year in Jordan, will again provide another opportunity to further strengthen the partnership of business and Governments in the promotion of peace and stability in the Middle East.

It is our earnest hope that peace can be permanently anchored in the region. No longer should the Middle East conflict be viewed as a threat to international peace and security. Like the positive developments that we continue to witness in other parts of the world, the Middle East should play its historical role as an international nexus for commerce and trade, civilization and culture, helping to build a world released from hate and antagonism, eschewing political and cultural divisions.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): In a situation marked by fluidity, as in the Middle East over the past year, it can be said that the only thing that is certain is change itself. Indeed, the period since our last consideration of this agenda item has been conspicuous by the remarkable political and strategic transformation which has taken place in the Middle East.

Without doubt, the epicentre of this process of change and transition has been the transformation in the relations between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel. The signing just over a year ago of the Declaration of Principles between the PLO and Israel paved the way for a number of agreements between the two parties, most notably the Cairo Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area to implement the Declaration.

The accelerating pace of peacemaking since the signing of that Declaration is undeniable testimony to its historic significance; long-existing barriers militating against peace have indeed been broken. Change, however, has not been limited to the formal act of treaty-making. President Yasser Arafat made a historic return to the Gaza Strip and Jericho after many years in exile to lead the Palestinian Authority, which, as a result of the agreement reached in August 1994, will gradually extend its jurisdiction to the rest of the West Bank in a number of important areas.

The transformation in relations between the PLO and Israel has spread in the overall context of the Middle East to relations between Jordan and Israel. Over the last 12 months we have indeed witnessed tremendous strides on the Jordan-Israel negotiating track, which culminated in the signing of the Treaty of Peace on 26 October 1994.

While these developments justify the hopes and optimism that accompanied the signing of the historic Declaration of Principles, Indonesia is also fully cognizant of the formidable challenges that still lie ahead. With respect to the PLO-Israel negotiating track, my delegation has on many occasions identified the urgent need for concerted efforts by the international community to come immediately to the assistance of the Palestinian Authority as it embarks on the reconstruction and redevelopment of the occupied territories, for tangible improvements in Palestinian living conditions are essential if the momentum for peace is to be maintained. We are further conscious of the continuation of a number of untenable policies and practices by the Government of Israel; unless revoked, these will impede further progress towards comprehensive peace. In this connection, Indonesia is keen to ensure that the extension of Palestinian self-rule throughout the West Bank, including Jerusalem, proceeds as a matter of urgency.

Furthermore, while acknowledging the positive developments in relations between Jordan and Israel, my delegation would like to stress that comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East also requires progress on the Syria-Israel and Lebanon-Israel negotiating tracks based on the framework established by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). In this regard, we note the intense third-party diplomatic efforts being made to ensure such a positive outcome in the Syrian-Israeli negotiating track.

At the same time, however, we are deeply concerned that, despite the notable progress towards peace in the Middle East, the Government of Israel persists in carrying out periodic raids against Lebanon, bringing immense suffering to its innocent people. Such acts constitute a flagrant violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, and are detrimental to the cause of peace in the region.

The path towards a comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East has long been well marked by numerous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. These, *inter alia*, call for Israeli withdrawal from all Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and from the Syrian Golan and the occupied Lebanese territories; respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized borders, and the recognition and exercise of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination. The United Nations, therefore, has historically played an invaluable role in, and reflected the will of the international community relating to, the settlement of the Arab-Israel conflict. My delegation deems it essential for the Organization to maintain and indeed augment its role in the peace process. Its enormous potential contribution to the peace process in the Middle East must be fully harnessed.

Of course, the United Nations has also made considerable contributions to the economic and social development of the region. Today, as the momentum towards peace gathers pace and the need to complement the progress on the political front with similar advances in the economic arena grows more apparent, the role of the United Nations becomes more pertinent than ever. In this context, my delegation warmly welcomes the consolidation and the further strengthening of the United Nations role in the economic and social fields, as most recently seen in its constructive role in the mobilization and coordination of international financial and technical assistance to the Palestinian people. It is my delegation's hope that Member States will extend their full support to this noble endeavour.

We have reached a critical period in the turbulent history of the Middle East. Yet today the yearning for peace in that region surpasses anything known in the past. Hence, it is imperative to ensure that the region does not relapse into strife and struggle, confrontation and instability, with their unimaginable consequences. Rather, we should seize the unprecedented opportunity now before us and marshal our collective commitment in turning the ongoing endeavours into an irreversible turning-point in history. The hopes and interests of the peoples of the Middle East, and indeed of all the world, call for the achievement of true peace, common security and generalized prosperity.

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon): I would like to begin by reiterating Lebanon's wholehearted commitment to the peace process launched in Madrid in 1991 on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). Lebanon's participation was in response to the initiative launched by the two sponsors of the peace conference, the United States and the then Soviet Union.

Subsequently, Lebanon has pursued the bilateral talks in Washington with a view to obtaining the full withdrawal of Israel from southern Lebanon in compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which affirms Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized boundaries. We wish to emphasize that the peace process launched in Madrid calls for the establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. We wish to reaffirm once again Lebanon's position, which has been constant since the Madrid peace conference.

Lebanon demands that Israel comply with Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which must be fully implemented. The implementation of that resolution will involve the full withdrawal of Israel to the internationally recognized boundaries of Lebanon. In this respect, I wish to stress the central role of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in the full implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). On this occasion, I also wish to convey our deep appreciation to UNIFIL's troop-contributing countries.

I would particularly like to stress again the need to maintain UNIFIL's strength and efficiency, in view of the important role awaiting it in the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). I take this opportunity once more to extend to the officers, soldiers and staff of UNIFIL our thanks for the admirable way in which they have been performing their duties since 1978.

I would like to stress clearly Lebanon's commitment to pursuing the objectives of the Madrid peace process, no matter what the difficulties, in order to achieve its projected goals. Israel must also withdraw fully from the Syrian Golan Heights, in compliance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). No peace will be attained in the region without complete Israeli

withdrawal from South Lebanon and the Syrian Golan Heights.

The occupation of South Lebanon by Israel since 1978 has brought havoc and violence to our country. Neither the 1978 Litani operation nor the 1982 invasion of Lebanon brought security to Israel. This occupation has proved that Israel's security cannot be maintained by flagrantly breaching the sovereignty of another State.

Furthermore, the concept of the so-called security zone established by Israel has failed to achieve security for Israel. The periodic Israeli aggressions up to the north of Lebanon underline the complete failure of that concept. This is why Israel must fully implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Lebanon is a staunch supporter of the Charter of the United Nations. It believes that the Security Council is an important international body which is responsible for peace and security and in which all countries that are victims of aggression can address breaches of international law, peace and security. From 1968 the Security Council was convened many times at Lebanon's request. However, since 1991 Lebanon has been denied the right to have the Council convened, under the pretext that a meeting of the Council would negatively affect the peace process launched in Madrid. We believe that asking to have the Council convened is not a privilege but a right and an obligation recognized by the United Nations Charter.

In August of this year we called for an emergency meeting of the Council to condemn the Israeli aggression against the village of Deir El-Zahrani and to ask for the lifting of the blockade of Yohmor. Some objected to a meeting of the Council, claiming that a public debate on the matter would divide the Council and have negative repercussions on the peace process. We, on the contrary, believe that debates in the Security Council and subsequent actions would end, or at least contain, Israeli aggressions and would thereby strengthen the peace process.

As long as these aggressions are unchecked, more will be perpetrated. The lack of action only allows Israel to continue its occupation, attacks and blockades without worrying about international opinion. We consider the Security Council to be the indisputable international political and moral authority. We believe that it is in duty bound to protect Member States that are victims of aggression. Continued unchecked aggression is not conducive to creating the appropriate climate we are looking for.

We are very disappointed that after more than three years of negotiations on the Lebanese-Israeli track Israel has not yet released hundreds of our citizens from Israeli prisons and detention camps manned by the Israelis in Lebanon - namely, the Al-Khiam and Marjayoun camps. The Al-Khiam and Marjayoun detention centres in southern Lebanon are notorious for the infliction of physical and psychological torture on prisoners. These detainees are cut off from the outside world and held outside any legal framework. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has adopted many resolutions concerning the issue of human rights in southern Lebanon. Those resolutions demonstrate that Israel is clearly violating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, and the Fourth Hague Convention of 1907.

Despite repeated appeals by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and demands made by the Lebanese Government and human rights societies around the world and in Lebanon, Israel still refuses to release the prisoners, in violation of the United Nations Charter and basic human rights. Furthermore, Israeli authorities have denied visits to the prisoners by the International Committee of the Red Cross and family members.

Last week, we launched an appeal to the international community in the Third Committee when it was dealing with human-rights questions. We demanded that Israel comply fully with the relevant resolutions on human rights and release the hundreds of Lebanese prisoners. We renew that appeal today.

Here, I must emphasize clearly and categorically that the matter of the repatriation of Palestinian refugees is of basic and crucial importance to Lebanon. Lebanon categorically rejects any attempts whatsoever to settle permanently in Lebanon the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians living on our national soil. This consistent position is embodied in the Lebanese Constitution, in accordance with the Taif Agreement of 1989. It represents the firm national consensus of all Lebanese. Lebanon remains fully committed to the realization of the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination. It calls for the full implementation of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948, which clearly and unequivocally affirms the right of the Palestinians to return to their homeland.

It is time for Israel to act accordingly, in order to ensure a just, lasting and peaceful conclusion to the

Middle East peace process. International law, embodied in relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, is of the essence in reaching a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

Peace and prosperity are what we desire. Lebanon suffered for too long from a war which lasted 16 years and ended only four years ago. We aspire to rebuild our country and provide a better future for our children. This is why our position is consistent with the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter.

Mr. Batu (Turkey): In the course of the debate on the situation in the Middle East last year I paid a tribute from this rostrum to President Arafat and Prime Minister Rabin for the statesmanship they had displayed in overcoming the obstacles in their path. So we were not surprised when the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to these leaders and Foreign Minister Peres in recognition of their courage, commitment and dedication in embarking on the path to peace. Last month, on the occasion of the signing of the Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty, we applauded another brave statesman, His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan. We hope that the architects of these historic events will set an example for the negotiations between the leaders of the other countries to the peace process and will be instrumental in the realization of lasting and comprehensive peace and stability in the region.

We also hope that the decision to establish diplomatic relations between Israel and Jordan will consolidate and enhance the foundations of peace and develop aspects of cooperation in the interests of those countries, thereby expanding the horizons of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in that part of the world.

We have made clear on a number of occasions our position regarding the question of the Middle East and the plight of the Palestinian people in the region. We are convinced that there can be no satisfactory, just and lasting peace in the Middle East unless the settlement is based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967)and 338 (1973).

This year's Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and the subsequent implementation agreements, such as the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area of 4 May, opened the way for the establishment of interim Palestinian self-government beginning in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank town of Jericho. It is expected that at the end of the interim period, the negotiations will have led to a just and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict based on the relevant resolutions which I have just mentioned.

However, the current situation in the West Bank and Gaza is fragile. There is much more work to be done to ensure that Palestinian autonomy can really start functioning.

The fruits of peace have not yet been seen by the suffering Palestinian people. The international community, which on paper showed considerable generosity towards the Palestinians, has been procrastinating over the transfer of pledges to the Palestinians. This vicious circle may cause uncontrolled explosions and major setbacks, not only in the region but also in the entire peace process. We believe that the donors should work to get the assistance out quickly to enable the people under the autonomous Palestinian administration to receive and feel at least some benefits of peace in their daily lives.

A Turkish economic and trade mission, comprised of Government officials and businessmen from the private sector, paid a visit to the area in order to explore possibilities of cooperation that could contribute to the improvement of reconstruction in Gaza and Jericho. My Prime Minister, during a visit to the region, met with Chairman Arafat and decided, taking into consideration the urgent needs of the Palestinian people in the region, including in Gaza, to send Turkish contractors there with $50 million to start building housing projects. Furthermore, we donated the sum of $2 million in order to meet the urgent needs of the Palestinian people at the beginning of this year.

In addition, we have been taking active part in the peace process from the very beginning, especially on multilateral tracks. We are prepared to contribute Turkish observers, as requested by both Israel and the Palestinians, to the Temporary International Presence, as called for in the Gaza-Jericho Agreement. We are proud to be one of the few countries whose participation has been sought by both sides.

From 12 to 15 December we are going to host the seventh meeting of the Middle East Multilateral Working Group on Refugees in Antalya. As a haven for refugees for many centuries and with our experience in resettling hundreds of thousands of refugees in our country in the past, we are going to propose to initiate a job-creation and employment project for Palestinian refugees.

I would like to conclude my statement by referring to the situation in Lebanon. We attach great importance to the maintenance of that country's territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty. We stress the importance of the full and strict implementation of the Taif Agreement by all parties concerned, and we also stress once again the need for the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which calls upon Israel to respect Lebanese territorial integrity and to withdraw its forces to the internationally recognized borders.

A lasting solution to the Middle East conflict should be based on the right of all States in the region, including Israel, to exist in peace behind their internationally recognized and secure borders.

Programme and organization of work

The President: I should like to inform members of the General Assembly of the following additions to our programme of work for the month of December.

On Friday, 2 December, in the morning, the General Assembly will first take action on some of the draft resolutions that were submitted under agenda item 37. Those draft resolutions will be announced in the *Journal*. The Assembly will then consider agenda item 150, entitled "Commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War", as already announced. That will be followed by agenda item 30 entitled "Zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic".

On Monday, 5 December, in the morning, in addition to considering agenda item 43, entitled "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields", the Assembly will take up agenda item 34, entitled "The situation of democracy and human rights in Haiti" in order to take action on draft resolution A/49/L.40, as well as agenda item 16 (a), entitled "Election of twelve members of the World Food Council"; agenda item 17 (h), entitled "Appointment of the members of the Consultative Committee on the United Nations Development Fund for Women"; and agenda item 17 (i), entitled "Appointment of members of the Committee on Conferences".

In the afternoon of the same day, the Assembly will consider sub-item (e) of agenda item 37, "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan". Members will recall that on 28 November the Assembly concluded the debate on sub-items (a) to (d) and (f) and (g) of agenda item 37.

On Friday, 9 December, in the morning, the General Assembly will take up the reports of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, and agenda item 18, "Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples".

In the afternoon of the same day the Assembly will take up the reports of the Sixth Committee.

On Wednesday, 14 December, in the morning, the General Assembly will consider agenda item 154, "United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s", and it will take up agenda item 22, "Assistance in mine clearance", in order to take action on the draft resolution submitted under this item.

On Thursday, 15 December, in the morning, the Assembly will take up agenda item 19, "Admission of new Members to the United Nations", in order to consider the admission of the Republic of Palau.

In the afternoon of the same day the Assembly will take up the reports of the First Committee.

The list of speakers for agenda items 37 (e) and 154 is now open.

The programme of work of the General Assembly for the month of December will be issued tomorrow in document A/INF/49/5/Add.3.

The scheduling of agenda items pending consideration by the Assembly will be announced in due course.

As we are entering the final phase of this part of the session before the General Assembly recesses for the holidays, I should like to appeal to members to submit, as soon as possible, the final text of the draft resolutions on which action by the Assembly is pending so that the work of the General Assembly will not be delayed.

I should also like to urge delegations, in view of the limited time available, to ensure the timely submission of draft resolutions on agenda items the Assembly has yet to consider. It is especially important to submit as soon as possible those draft resolutions which have programme budget implications. With only three weeks remaining, appropriate time has to be allowed for both the Advisory

Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee to review any financial implications.

I should also like once again to ask members to ensure that meetings begin on time, namely at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. precisely. I note that unfortunately sometimes even speakers at the top of the list are not here for the beginning of the meeting and that only delays the debate. On the other hand, sometimes it happens that the times indicated for the length of statements do not correspond to the actual time taken and that requires rescheduling the statements for future meetings.

I also note the prolonged absence of delegations in the Hall, which prevents us from making announcements that are important to all members. I hope that I will be understood and that everybody will come to meetings on time.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.